

Livable Communities Act

S 1619 and HR 4690: Federal framework to promote local competitiveness and sustainability

Senate Sponsor: Sen. Christopher Dodd (D-Conn.) • Co-sponsors: Daniel Akaka (D-Hawaii), Michael Bennet (D-Colo.), Sherroed Brown (D-Ohio), Benjamin Cardin (D-Pa.), Dick Durbin (D-Ill.), Al Franken (D-Minn.), Sen. Kirsten Gillibran (D-N.Y.), Tom Harkin (D-Iowa), Mary Landrieu (D-La.), Frank Lautenberg (D-N.J.), Carl Levin (D-Mich.), Joseph Lieberman (I-Conn.), Robert Menendez (D-N.J.), Jeff Merkley (D-Ore.), Jack Reed (D-R.I.), Bernard Sanders (D-Vt.), Charles Schumer (D-N.Y.), Arlen Specter (D-Pa.), Mark Warner (D-Va.), Ron Wyden (D-Ore.)

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Key provisions of the Livable Communities Act

Incentives for regional comprehensive planning. The bill authorizes \$400 million over four years to help regions develop plans that link transportation, housing, community and economic development, and environmental strategies.

Funding to implement sustainable development projects. Communities would be able to seek challenge grants to implement key projects contained in regional plans, including affordable housing, transit-oriented development, transit service, economic development, bike-pedestrian projects, and brownfield and infill redevelopment. This provision of the bill calls for \$3.75 billion over three years.

Assistance for regional livability initiatives. The legislation ensures federal agencies are supportive partners in regional planning by establishing critical research and technical assistance capacities. A new Office of Sustainable Housing and Communities, within the U.S. Dept. of Housing and Urban Development, would coordinate federal policies, and serve as a resource for best practices and technical assistance.

An interagency council on sustainable communities. To facilitate interagency coordination, the council brings together the Depts. of Housing and Urban Development, and Transportation, Environmental Protection Agency, and other federal agencies to coordinate policy, research, training, and funding; identify barriers to sustainable development; and promote the linkage of transportation, housing, environmental, and energy policies.

Benefits of the Livable Communities Act

- Helps local communities plan and create better and more affordable places for Americans to live, work, and raise their families.
- Reduces traffic congestion, greenhouse gas emissions, and gasoline consumption.
- Protects rural areas, natural resources, and green spaces.
- Revitalizes retail and commercial corridors.
- Creates more affordable housing close to jobs, transportation, and amenities.

What is the Livable Communities Act?

The Livable Communities Act (S 1619 and HR 4690) would provide a multi-year authorization for federal sustainability initiatives. The bill authorizes \$4 billion over four years for regional planning and challenge grants to make communities more livable, and eliminates federal barriers to sustainable development.



Amendment to Livable Communities Act (S 1619 and HR 4690)

Incentives needed to leverage employer engagement

“This generation’s responsibility is to align investment to create livable, smart, productive, sustainable communities.”

– ADOLFO CARRION, DIRECTOR, WHITE HOUSE OFFICE OF URBAN AFFAIRS

Employers are essential to livable communities

Through employer-assisted housing initiatives, employers around the country have discovered the advantage of having their workers living in quality, stable homes near jobs and transportation. Employer-assisted housing is a bottom-line benefit that promotes a stable workforce and strong communities. In addition to leveraging public-private partnerships in support of workforce housing, employer-assisted housing initiatives engage employers as advocates for livable communities.

Employer engagement pays off

The bottom-line benefits that employer-assisted housing initiatives bring to employers, and the sustainable communities that can be created by engaging employers in planning, demonstrate the value of expanding on lessons learned in Illinois:

- Since 2000, more than 2,000 employees in the Chicago region have purchased homes with financial help from their employers. The state’s tax credit and matching funds have contributed \$2.3 million, and leveraged \$8 million in down payment assistance from employers. This amounts to \$400 million in home sales.
- Employers in Illinois have helped build community acceptance for needed housing development, as well as supported significant policy change, including strengthening links between workforce housing and job opportunities.

More employer partnerships are needed

The National Housing Conference, MPC, and REACH California support inclusion of language in the Livable Communities Act to encourage employer-assisted housing, with incentives that could leverage employer engagement.

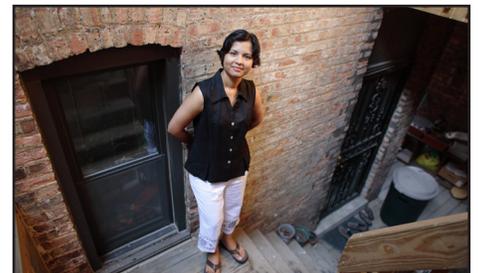
With public and private-sector partners working together, communities can benefit from increased economic development, improved access to jobs and amenities, reduced housing and transportation costs for working families, and strong, livable communities.

What is Employer-Assisted Housing?

Employer-assisted housing is a cost-effective, hassle-free way for employers to help their employees access homebuyer education and credit counseling, and buy or rent homes close to work. When working families are not able to live near work, their long commutes contribute to traffic congestion, dependence on foreign oil, and air pollution. This creates staggering societal costs: unstable and unaffordable housing markets; neighborhoods and families devastated by foreclosures; increased stress levels, reduced worker productivity, and unsafe neighborhoods.

“The ‘Prescription for Homeownership’ program has been great for the company and for our employees. When an employee purchases a home, they want to work harder and strive for a promotion so that they can maintain that home.”

Stephen M. Wing
Director of Government Programs, CVS



Call to action

Contact your U.S. Senators and Representatives. Ask them to sign on as a co-sponsor of the Livable Communities Act, and urge them to support the addition of incentives for private-sector engagement and employer-assisted housing within this program.

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